

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ROUMANIAN PREMIER.

By Leo Wolfson.

The second interview arranged for me with reference to the Roumanian Jewish question took place today, when I was received by Dr. J. Bratiano, the Roumanian Premier.

I met the premier at his invitation at the Palais Drefus, on the famous Champs Elysee, in Paris, now being occupied as the headquarters of the Roumanian Mission to the Peace Conference. Mr. Dreyfus, a leading French-Jewish banker is the Roumanian General Consul in Paris, and he placed his palatial residence at the disposition of the Roumanian government.

dially and the interview and discussion took place just between us two, nobody else being present.

After he asked me for some information about myself which I gave him to the effect that I am travelling as a journalist representing the International Jewish Press Bureau, and am making a study of the general conditions of the Jews in Europe and am particularly interested in the Roumanian Jewish question, he launched into a presentation of his views on the Jewish situation in Roumania.

He began by saying that he considered that his last law decree of May 18, 1919, in his opinion completely solved the Jewish question once and forever. Now, he continued, there remains only one thing to do, and that is the creation of friendly relations between the Jews and the Roumanians. All that the Jews have to do now is to file an application for citizenship and it is granted them as a matter of course, if they come within the rules laid down by the law. They are now in a position to place themselves in a sympathetic light towards the Roumanian people by acting as a sort of uniting link between the Hungarian and Russian Jews, who are now becoming Roumanian Jews by the annexation to Roumania of Bessarabia and Transylvania and the other provinces. The Jews, he continued, have made a great error in insisting on the insertion in the Peace Treaty of the clause granting to the League of Nations or to the Great Powers, the right to supervise the carrying out of the terms of the treaty with reference to their rights. He insisted that they should have protested and expressed their confidence in the country. As it is he fears that many misunderstandings may arise and that both Roumania and the Jews themselves will suffer by reason thereof.

He said that he had suggested to the Roumanian Jews to make such a protest and that he is sorry that they did not accept his good advice.

I interjected a question to the effect that if Roumania honestly intends to carry out the terms of the treaty, what reason is there to fear such a clause in the treaty, and surely he need not fear any foreign interference on that account under such circumstances. He replied that he considers Roumania specially humiliated by the insertion of such a clause and that the Roumanian agitation of a question which with all his heart he wished and hopes to be once and for all disposed of besides it is an invasion of the sovereign rights of friendly relations between the Jews and Roumanians as being absolutely necessary and said to me "considering you as a friend of the country and of the Jews, I hope you will aid me in this

direction and do all you can to establish such relations while you will be in Roumania."

To this appeal I began to state my side of the story and amongst other things I said to him:

"To begin with your last law decree of emancipation is not quite satisfactory. I am reliably informed by competent men that there are no less than eighteen points of objections to the same, and I named a number of them, which I pointed out in a previous article on the new emancipation act. He tried to explain to me that the objections are rather exaggerated and maintained his position that the law is a good one. Continuing I said "while you are talking to me in a friendly spirit and seem evidently desirous of friendly relations between my people and yours, let me call to your attention a situation which not only prevents for the moment a rapprochement between the parties but tends to create and keep up bitter feelings. "Do you know, I said, "that five thousand Jews who have served the country are now filling your prisons under sentences of ten and fifteen years and some under life sentences for alleged desertions and that these cruel sentences were imposed by Roumanian court martials? Do you know for instance that for the same offences Roumanian soldiers have been sentenced only from three to five years? Let me tell you of one case—the most cruel and unjust I have ever come across—and which I desire to call to your particular attention, with the hope that you will see to it that justice is done. A soldier, Itzig Ciobotaru I do not know anything about him, nor his family or relations, but I have exact copies of the complete record day or two a memorandum of the of this case. Twice this soldier was lost in some weeds in some of the war campaigns and twice he had returned to his company. In one of the battles he was taken as a prisoner. Upon his company's records he was marked as a deserter, and in his absence was tried by a court martial and upon the testimony given by three witnesses, was sentenced to death. When Itzig Cuobotaru was freed he returned to his company. He demanded a revision of his trial and it was granted. Upon the trial, two of the witnesses stated that their previous testimony was based upon information given to them by the third witness, and that they have no personal knowledge of the facts they had previously testimony is evidently false, and yet I said, Mr. Premier, that court martial by a vote of three against two sentenced Itzig Ciebotarau to death."

Mr. Bratiano listened with evident interest to my expose and aid, "I must

admit that many injustices have been done to the Jews, particularly by the court martials. I have never intervened in any military cases, except once, and that was to save a Jew. I am trying to do my best to set things straight and correct existing evil to the extent that it is possible." He asked me to present to him within a case of Itzbig Ciobotaru and will order an investigation.

Continuing, I said: "In the first instance I ask for the immediate release of this man so evidently innocent, and as to the general question of the so-called desertion cases and other military offenses alleged to have been committed by Jews a general amnesty law should be passed for their benefit. You cannot," I said, "go on asking friendship with one hand and with the other persecute the Jews in the manner it is being done by the Court martials.

I then attempted to go into some of the past history and the Premier interrupted me by saying, "of course if you desire to go into the past, I am ready to do so, let us however, stop here, by an admission that many errors of policy and judgment, have been committed by both the Roumanian government government and the Jews, I know also that the Jews have been committed by both the Rouman-

ian government and the Jews, I know also that the Jews have suffered from many injustices. Let us consider however the present. Nothing good can come out of a rehearing of the old hatreds. Continuing I replied that if he is ready to do substantial justice, and consider my statements and act upon my suggestions, there is no doubt that much can be done just now to heal the breach and I should be happy to assist in doing so. He said that he will give due consideration to what I said.

He offered to give me a letter to the minister of the interior to aid me in any investigations I may desire to make. He also assured me that he means to do the right thing, and I should call his attention to any severe cases which may come to my notice and he will try to do all he can to right any injustice.

He wished me "Bon voyage" to Roumania, and we parted.

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